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INFO RUEHXP/ALL NATO POST COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0046  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 0756  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L COPENHAGEN 000262

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/28/2016

TAGS: PREL MOPS MARR I2 AF DA

SUBJECT: KEEPING DENMARK ENGAGED IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JAMES P. CAIN,  
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) During a February 28 meeting, the Ambassador stressed to Defense Minister Gade the USG's strong interest in Denmark's continued contributions in Iraq. Gade said the Danish government will prepare a "white paper" in May that analyzes how Denmark can best continue to contribute to Iraq's security and reconstruction needs. Gade said he will also lead a group visit to Iraq in the spring and underscored the political need to expose as many Danish opinion-makers as possible to progress on the ground in Iraq. The Danish government will then seek parliament's approval in late May or in June to extend the current mandate for Danish deployments in Iraq beyond July 1.

¶2. (C) Gade said he is pessimistic that the Social Democratic and Social Liberal parties will vote in favor of the next extension. At the same time, he expressed confidence that the Danish People's Party will once again vote with the government despite growing unease with the Iraqi deployment among rank-and-file members. The Defense Minister said Prime Minister Fogh Rasmussen is "steady" on this issue and not at all inclined to cede decision-making on this issue to the opposition. Nevertheless, Gade stressed how important it is to the Danish debate that the new Iraqi government be in place and solicit Denmark's continued contributions.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador also expressed appreciation for Denmark's commitment to do more in Afghanistan. He also asked about a potential delay in deployment reportedly related to a civilian contractor's security concerns about transporting equipment through Pakistan in the wake of the Mohammed cartoon controversy. Gade said the Danish government still wants to put "boots on the ground" as soon as possible in support of NATO ISAF III expansion. The Danish defense minister will accompany his British counterpart on a March 15-19 visit to Afghanistan, including to Helmand Province where Danish troops expect to be deployed. Gade pledged to share his views, including on timing for the Danish deployment, after that visit.

¶4. (C) Noting that he understood the current U.S. position on force generation for NATO Response Force (NRF), Gade nevertheless urged the USG to pledge ground assets that would allow joint participation with the United States and smaller NATO allies. Gade noted that Denmark is among those NATO allies that believe the NRF should be an engine for transformation and deployed often. He said an enhanced US NRF pledge would send the right signal to NATO allies.  
CAIN